

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) Process for the treatment of fresh meat, ~~in particular for~~ preserving said fresh meat comprising fresh beef, pork, veal, lamb, game, poultry, horsemeat, fish, raw sausage and ham, in which the fresh meat is stored for a presettable time at a superatmospheric pressure in an air-tightly sealable space after supply of oxygen in an atmosphere essentially consisting of oxygen, characterized in that, during the supply of the oxygen, its temperature is selected such that, and ~~the~~ feed rate is set or controlled to be low enough that, the fresh meat does not freeze, in that the pressure during the storage is selected to be high enough, and the storage time long enough, so that the fresh meat is completely penetrated by oxygen, and in that, during ~~the~~ removal of the oxygen, ~~the~~ a removal rate is set or controlled to be low enough that, firstly, the fresh meat does not freeze and, secondly, the oxygen permeating the treated fresh meat is removed from the fresh meat without bubble formation.

2. (Currently Amended) Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that during the storage there is no ~~supply~~ supply and removal of oxygen and/or in that the fresh meat is treated in sliced pieces, ~~in particular~~ in consumer portions and/or in that, during supply of the oxygen the pressure present within the sealed-off space is measured and, after reaching a preset maximum pressure, the oxygen supply is terminated.

3. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 2, characterized in that ~~the~~ an oxygen atmosphere in the sealed-off space is brought to a pressure of approximately 10 to 20 bar, ~~in particular approximately 13 to 17 bar, preferably approximately 15 bar~~ and is maintained during the storage time and/or in that, during supply of the oxygen, the pressure is

increased in an ~~essentially~~ a linear manner, ~~in particular~~ continuously or in a plurality of steps, ~~preferably~~ between 10 and 20, ~~in particular in approximately 15 steps, and/or~~ and in that the oxygen is supplied within approximately 45 minutes to 4 hours, ~~in particular within approximately 1 to 3 hours, preferably within 1 to 2 hours, in particular~~ continuously.

4. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 3, characterized in that in a space having a volume of approximately 100 liters, a maximum of approximately 70 liters of oxygen per minute, ~~in particular a maximum of approximately 30 to 60 liters of oxygen per minute, or less, are supplied and/or~~ in that in the case of a space having a volume of approximately 15,000 liters, ~~a maximum of approximately 2500 liters of oxygen per minute are supplied, advantageously a maximum of approximately 1400 liters of oxygen per minute, in particular~~ a maximum of approximately 1200 liters of oxygen per minute or less.

5. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 4, characterized in that the storage time is selected to be approximately 5 to 15 hours, ~~in particular approximately 7 to 12 hours, preferably approximately 8 to 10 hours, and/or~~ in that the storage time in the case of meat stored in advance is selected to be shorter than in the case of freshly slaughtered meat.

6. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 5, characterized in that during removal of the oxygen the pressure is decreased essentially linearly, ~~in particularly~~ and continuously, or in a plurality of steps, ~~preferably~~ between 10 and 20, ~~in particular in approximately 20 steps and/or~~ and in that during removal of the oxygen, ~~essentially the same time, in particular approximately 8 to 20 minutes, preferably approximately 13 to 16 minutes,~~ is provided per bar of pressure decrease.

7. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 6, characterized in that after reaching a preset minimum pressure of ~~preferably~~ between approximately 0.5 and 1.2 bar, in particular ~~approximately 0.7 bar~~, this pressure is removed at a higher gradient.

8. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 7, characterized in that the oxygen is removed within approximately 1 to 4 hours, ~~in particular within approximately 3 hours, and/or~~ and in that the supply ~~and/or~~ removal of the oxygen is carried out via a controllable inlet or outlet valve.

9. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 8, characterized in that after reaching the minimum pressure, the outlet valve is essentially completely opened ~~and/or~~ a further outlet valve having a large orifice cross-sectional area is opened.

10. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 9, characterized in that the oxygen is supplied to the sealed space without prior removal of ~~the~~ a gas mixture corresponding to ~~the~~ an ambient atmosphere or in that, prior to supply of the oxygen, the gas mixture corresponding to the ambient atmosphere present in the sealed space is removed as far as the generation of a preset reduced pressure.

11. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 10, characterized in that the oxygen supplied has a degree of purity of at least 50%, ~~in particular at least 90%, preferably at least 95% and/or~~ and in that the oxygen atmosphere during the storage has a degree of purity of at least 50%, ~~in particular at least 90%, preferably at least 95%.~~

12. (Currently Amended) Process according to claim 11, characterized in that the fresh meat is introduced into the sealable space in ~~the~~ a chilled state, ~~in particular~~ at a temperature in the range from approximately 0°C to 3°C and in that the temperature in the sealed space is maintained during the storage, ~~preferably~~ in a range of approximately -5° to +3°C.

13. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for carrying out the process according to claim ~~12~~ 1, characterized by a housing (1) in which are provided an air-tightly sealable opening (2) for introducing/removing the fresh meat (29) on a carrier rack (23), an inlet orifice (10) which can be connected to at least one oxygen supply (14, 12) and opens out ~~in particular~~ on ~~the~~ a ceiling side and at least one removal orifice (15) which is arranged in particular on the ceiling side, and ensures a defined outflow from ~~the~~ an interior of the housing (1).

14. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 13, characterized in that, on the inlet orifice (10) for supplying oxygen, a controllable supply valve, ~~in particular a solenoid valve~~ (4) is provided, via which the oxygen supply rate per unit time and/or supply velocity can be controlled, and/or in that at the removal orifice (15) for removing the high-pressure oxygen atmosphere, a controllable removal valve, ~~in particular a solenoid valve~~ (6), is provided, via which the oxygen removal rate per unit time and/or the removal velocity can be controlled.

15. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 14, characterized in that an electronic control unit (9) is provided, via which the orifice cross-sectional area of the supply valve (4) and/or the removal valve (6) can be controlled, and/or in that the housing (1) is constructed to be rectangular or cylindrical, with the opening (2) for introducing/removing the fresh meat (29) being provided in each case ~~in the~~ at ends of the housing (1).

16. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 15, characterized in that for the air- and pressure-tight sealing of the a housing door (3), a bayonet closure is provided and/or in that for the air- and pressure-tight sealing of the ~~orifice~~ opening (2) via the housing door (3) a bayonet closure is provided and/or in that the oxygen is supplied via an oxygen distribution apparatus disposed within or outside the housing (1), which distribution apparatus consists ~~in particular~~ of tube elements arranged in a star shape, ~~i.e. radially spaced~~.

17. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 16, characterized in that the housing (1) for removing the gas mixture corresponding to the ambient atmosphere has an evacuation orifice (32) ~~preferably~~ disposed on the ceiling and/or in that to store oxygen an oxygen tank (14) disposed outside the housing (1) is provided, which tank is connected to the inlet orifice (10) ~~in particular~~ via an oxygen vaporizer (12) and via a pipe (11, 13) which can be closed by means of the ~~solenoid~~ supply valve (4).